



Congressman Denny Rehberg, 516 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515

NEWS

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Rehberg Urges U.S. Health Secretary to Cover Montana CHP Shortfalls

WASHINGTON, DC - Montana's Congressman, Denny Rehberg, today urged the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to make surplus funds available to cover children's health insurance in Montana. Rehberg called on HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson to quickly shift \$660 million in unspent SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) funds, allowing states like Montana to cover current shortfalls.

"Like many states, Montana has a waiting list of children who need health insurance coverage," Rehberg said. "The HHS has leftover funds in the SCHIP program from past years. Secretary Thompson has signaled his willingness to use that money to defray state shortfalls. I'm urging him to take that step quickly on behalf of kids in Montana who still need this coverage."

Congress created SCHIP in 1997, setting aside \$40 billion in federal matching funds over 10 years to help states expand health care coverage to uninsured children. Administered by the states, the program allows states to offer health insurance for children who are not already insured. SCHIP provides health insurance coverage for nearly 11,000 children in Montana, with still more on a waiting list.

"In Montana, the percentage of children without health insurance has increased over the past ten years, with fewer children falling under employer-sponsored health coverage," Rehberg explained. "Fortunately, legislation signed into law last year permits states with current shortfalls and waiting lists – like Montana – to use unspent SCHIP funds from earlier years."

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